

**PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTS, LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS FROM  
VANDERBIJLPARK SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON OBLIGATORY  
PRESCRIBED SCHOOL UNIFORMS**

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
M.Tech: Fashion in the Department of Visual Arts and Design, Faculty of  
Human Sciences, Vaal University of Technology.**

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**December 2007  
VANDERBIJLPARK**

**Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author  
and are not necessarily to be attributed to  
the Vaal University of Technology.**

## **DECLARATION**

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated. All sources used are acknowledged by giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to make use of this opportunity to express my sincerest appreciation to the following outstanding people for their contributions to my studies.

- Professor A.M. van Aardt, my supervisor, for her special guidance, encouragement and support. Without her I would not have been able to complete these studies.
- Professor F. Steyn for the statistical analyses and data processing. It was a privilege to work with such a competent academic.
- Dijana Wilson who helped and supported me tremendously with the technical aspects and layout of my dissertation.
- The principals, educators and respondents who supported me and helped me to complete the questionnaires.
- My husband Thinus, and my daughter Lané who sacrificed so much time, for their patience and support throughout my studies.
- My father and mother, who helped, supported and encouraged me with pride.
- My colleagues at the Department of Visual Arts and Design, especially Annemarie, Sandra, Hanlie, Anita, Louise and Valerie for their interest, support and encouragement.
- Kiren Thatiahah, the HoD, for his motivation, trust and support.

Finally, I thank GOD for all his blessings and grace and for making it possible for me to complete these studies successfully.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Thinus, my daughter, Lané, my father, Gerhard and my mother Trien.

## **ABSTRACT**

**INTRODUCTION:** Supporters of school uniforms argue that uniforms serve as a social and economic equaliser, reducing competition regarding clothing and reducing demands on parents to buy expensive, trendy clothes. Other benefits mentioned are functionality, time saving, appearance, safety, and improved academic standards and behaviour. Opponents of school uniforms differ maintaining that compulsory uniform infringes on learners' constitutional rights to self-expression. The problem statement encompasses the desirability and viability of obligatory school uniforms in South Africa.

**AIM:** The broad aim of this study is to determine the perspectives of parents, learners and educators at public schools in Vanderbijpark on obligatory school uniforms.

**METHODOLOGY:** A structured questionnaire was used to gather data. Section 1 comprised general information, section 2 dealt with the advantages and disadvantages of obligatory school uniforms and section 3 contained options for more trendy school uniforms. A random stratified sample of learners in two grade 10 classes and their parents and educators was chosen from four selected schools.

**RESULTS:** Most of the parents were between 41 and 45 years of age, by far the majorities was white, nearly a quarter had a diploma/certificate and another quarter a degree, nearly three-quarters were married or traditionally married, and nearly a third spent R901-R1200 per year on school uniforms. Most parents and educators and nearly two-thirds of the learners were highly in favour of school uniforms. Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of eight factors with reference to obligatory school uniforms as perceived by parents, learners and educators, the educators rated seven of the eight factors higher than parents and learners did, while parents rated the same factors higher than learners did, implying that learners were the least positive. The order in which they ranked the advantages was often the same or similar. They all ranked the competition aspect first, the academic aspect seventh and the economic aspect eighth, while functionality was ranked either third or fourth. Regarding preferences for more trendy uniforms, three-quarter pants and sandals were rated very low in popularity. All the stakeholders were in favour of the more traditional pants, shirt and proper shoes for both boys and girls, with a slightly more informal jacket instead of the traditional blazer.

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## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION:** This refers to the use of symbols for communicating an idea or thought and implies the communication through the clothes that we wear which does not involve verbal expressions through speaking or writing (Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen & Touchie-Specht 2000:4).

**SCHOOL WEAR:** This can be considered a school uniform when it serves as a group emblem, certifies an institution, reveals individuals' relative positions and suppresses individuality (Wilkins 1999:19-22). Kaiser (1998:378) adds that uniforms prescribe a certain standard and style of dress.

**SCHOOL DRESS CODE POLICY:** School dress code policies tell learners what they are not allowed to wear while obeying a set of rules concerning appearance (Weitzel 2004:6). Joseph (1986:144) points out that dress codes set limits on the styles of everyday clothes, in this case school wear, that may be worn within the context of the organisational culture, in this case the school culture.

**GYM:** This garment can be defined as a sleeveless tunic or pinafore worn over a blouse, which originally became popular for sportswear, as it was shorter than the usual dresses (Cunnington & Mansfield 1969:45-46).

s.u. School Uniform

USA United States of America